

LCQ4: Opening bus-only lanes to other public transport modes

Following is a question by the Hon Adrian Ho and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Liu Chun-san, in the Legislative Council today (June 4):

Question:

In the reply to a question from a Member of this Council in 2018, the Government undertook to conduct a study and consult stakeholders on the proposal to convert bus-only lanes into "public transport-only lanes" with a view to allowing the shared use by other public transport modes. Meanwhile, according to information from the Transport Department, the number of bus trips along busy corridors in certain districts decreased cumulatively by 6 762 trips between 2014 and 2023. As such, there are views that this is an appropriate time to review the bus-only lane policy. However, the Government has indicated earlier on that it currently has no plans to open bus-only lanes for use by other vehicles. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics for each year of the past five years on the changes in the number of bus-only lanes in Hong Kong, the average traffic volume and vehicle speed in these lanes during peak hours, as well as how these figures compare with those for other lanes on the same road sections; if so, of the details; if not, how the Government determines the number of bus-only lanes to be added or reduced in the absence of such data;

(2) of the findings of the Government's study and consultation on the aforesaid proposal to convert bus-only lanes into "public transport-only lanes", as well as whether there are specific reasons and actual data supporting the current decision of not to open up bus-only lanes; and

(3) with regard to the reduction in the number of bus trips along certain busy corridors in recent years, whether the authorities have reassessed the need for bus-only lanes on such corridors and studied the opening up of such lanes; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Hong Kong citizens mainly commute by public transportation, which accounts for nearly 90 per cent of the total passenger trips each day. Franchised bus is a road-based public transport mode with the highest carrying capacity. The average daily patronage in 2024 exceeded 3.7 million, making up over 30 per cent of the total daily public transport ridership.

Bus-only lanes (BOLs) (see note) are traffic lanes designated for use only by "franchised bus" or "franchised and non-franchised bus" during the

prescribed time. Other vehicles have to make use of other traffic lanes next to the BOLs or alternative routes. Under the policy of giving priority to public transportation, the Transport Department (TD) has implemented BOLs to accord priority to buses with high carrying capacity to use the roads, thereby reducing delays caused by traffic congestion and encouraging the public to use convenient public transportation for travel.

Our reply in response to the questions raised by the Hon Adrian Ho is set out below:

(1) In implementing bus priority measures, the TD will consider the actual road situation and traffic conditions, including the design of roads and junctions, the number of traffic lanes, the number of bus routes and bus service frequencies, the traffic volume of other types of vehicles, availability of alternative routes, the impact on the flow of other vehicles, etc and carefully assess the feasibility of such measures, in order to strike a proper balance and ensure smooth operation of the transport network. In addition, the TD will work out the appropriate effective period of bus priority measures based on the actual road conditions and consult relevant stakeholders and districts to ensure the measures are in the interest of the public.

As of May 2025, there were 115 BOLs in total across Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories. Over the past five years, the TD added 16 BOLs. According to the TD's on-site observations as well as feedback from bus companies, BOLs can effectively minimise the impact of traffic congestion on bus services, enhance the stability and efficiency of bus frequencies and facilitate the travel of the public. The TD did not compile statistics on the daily average volume of bus traffic and vehicle speed in respect of each BOL compared with those for other lanes on the same road sections.

(2) The TD has examined the proposal of converting some BOLs into "public transport-only lanes" for the shared use by other modes of public transport such as taxis and public light buses (PLBs). In doing so, we need to consider the pros and cons. While the proposal can benefit passengers of PLBs and taxis, it will at the same time increase the number of vehicles sharing the same road space with buses, making BOLs busier and affecting bus passengers. Taking the BOL of Tuen Mun Road eastbound near Harrow International School Hong Kong to Sham Tseng Interchange as an example, about 510 buses pass through the BOL per hour during peak hours on weekdays carrying about 21 000 passengers, compared with the services of taxis and PLBs carrying about 1 100 passengers per hour during peak hours on weekdays at the same road section. On the premise of maintaining smooth operation of the BOL and balancing the needs of various road users, this section of BOL was not opened up. In light of changes in traffic flow and bus operation of Tuen Mun Road after the implementation of new toll plans at the Tai Lam Tunnel, the TD will review the arrangement of BOL of Tuen Mun Road in a timely manner under the public transport-oriented policy.

If the opening up of certain BOLs can improve the operational efficiency of other public transport modes, the TD will make better use of these BOLs through various means by taking into account relevant factors. For example,

some green minibus (GMB) routes require access to specific BOLs to reach designated pick-up and drop-off points. After considering factors such as service frequencies, boarding/alighting points as well as bus traffic of the relevant BOLs, the TD will issue permits to the routes concerned for using the relevant BOLs. At present, a total of 56 GMB routes have been granted such permits.

(3) The TD is committed to reducing the number of buses plying on busy roads in Central, Causeway Bay and Yau Tsim Mong districts with a view to reducing roadside air pollution, traffic congestion, etc. As most of the BOLs are not located at these busy roads, there is no direct impact on the overall bus traffic of BOLs.

The TD has from time to time reviewed and improved BOLs and traffic facilities of the road sections in the vicinity. For example, the TD has reviewed the arrangement of the BOL from 200 Hennessy Road westbound to the section of Hennessy Road near Luard Road. After reviewing the traffic data, actual road situation and other factors as well as consulting relevant stakeholders and the district, the TD adjusted the effective period of the BOL of Hennessy Road westbound between Fleming Road and Luard Road from 7am – 9am to 5pm – 7pm, and shortened the BOL by 65 metres to balance the needs of other vehicles for loading and unloading.

In summary, the TD will continue to monitor the implementation of BOLs and road traffic, and review and enhance individual road sections in a timely manner.

Thank you, President.

Note: BOLs refer to bus lanes and designated bus gates.